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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001106

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SUBJECT: MEK/CAMP ASHRAF:MEK COOPERATIVE IN FACE OF NEW GOI
ASSERTIONS OF AUTHORITY

REF: A. BAGHDAD 681
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1030

Classified By: Acting Political-Military Counselor Philip Kosnett for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: The Government of Iraq (GoI) continued its efforts to establish civil authority over the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK) community at Camp Ashraf. The GoI has taken over responsibility for the hospital, and is in discussions to take over electric and water services. The GoI conducted a dog search of the camp with cooperation from the MEK and found no weapons or other contraband. The MEK also agreed to give up the disputed Lord Slynn building, which should end the 40 day sit-in protest, and have disassembled guard towers to avoid a dispute over who should man them. While tensions are down this week, we still note the possibility of confrontation later this week when the GoI moves to set up a town hall inside of Camp Ashraf, or thereafter when GoI enforces restrictions on military uniforms and tears down MEK monuments and statues. Embassy and MNF-I are encouraging both sides to maintain a cooperative stance and to avoid unpleasant surprises. END SUMMARY

GoI establishing authority; MEK cooperating

[1](#)2. (S) On April 16, the Commander of the Iraqi Army (IA) battalion at Ashraf, Colonel Latif, met with MNF-I representatives and informed them - with no MEK present - that the GoI intended to implement a number of changes at Camp Ashraf in the coming weeks.

- When the current GoI survey of the Ashraf population is completed in the next few days, (Ref. A) GoI would take the disputed Lord Slynn building by force, using tear gas and water hoses on any protestors.
- The Iraqi Police (IP) would then take over the camp's inner ring guard towers, currently manned by unarmed MEK watchmen. (Note: GoI took control of the outer towers on February 20.)
- GoI would establish a Town Hall and appoint an official from the Office of the National Security Advisor as mayor of Ashraf.
- GoI would take over the Ashraf Hospital, electrical substation and water purification facility.
- IP would search the entire camp for weapons and contraband with canine units.
- GoI would remove all the MEK statutes and monuments throughout the camp.
- GoI would insist that all Camp Ashraf Residents (CAR) wear civilian clothing and turn in all military uniforms.
- GoI would open a refugee camp for defectors who wish to leave Ashraf.

[1](#)3. (S) Colonel Latif also said that 15 MEK leaders could travel to Baghdad to meet with high-level GoI officials. U.S.

officials urged the GOI reps to share their plans with the MEK in advance of launching these initiatives, which would increase the likelihood of a cooperative MEK reaction. We subsequently learned that the MEK had obtained access to these plans, through unclear means.

14. (S) Considering the tense state of affairs at Ashraf, Embassy and MNF-I Task Force 134 (TF-134) expected that these announcements could cause a major confrontation between the GoI and the MEK. However, in a shift of tactics by both sides, the MEK adopted a more compliant posture, and the GoI engaged in consultations with the MEK leadership before taking action.

--The MEK sent a letter to Prime Minister Maliki through several channels, indicating they would give up the Lord Slynn building after an additional fence was constructed, and QSlynn building after an additional fence was constructed, and would abandon and remove the inner-ring guard towers.

--Subsequently, the MEK and IA came to an agreement on procedures for the MEK to hand over the building on April 22, along with several trailers in the area and a disputed patch of ground to the south.

--On April 20, the MEK abandoned and quickly disassembled the camp's inner-ring guard towers. Despite objections from the IA that the towers needed to be rebuilt, the MEK reportedly cut the footings on the support beams to render them unusable. (Comment: The MEK likely did not want to provide the GoI the additional visibility into the camp the internal towers would have provided; removing them may have irritated some GoI personnel, but it eliminated a scuffle for control

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of the towers. End Comment.)

15. (S) The MEK also cooperated with a thorough search of the camp by Iraqi Army bomb-detecting dogs. Nothing was found other than expended MNF-I ammunition in an MNF-I dump, and an old box of used fireworks in a MEK warehouse. There was some tension when the dog teams entered residences and women's quarters, but this was smoothed over by MEK participation in the search.

16. (S) The MEK also agreed to the GoI taking responsibility for the camp's hospital, electrical and water facilities. Although details have to be worked out, the plan calls for the Diyala Health Department to take over responsibility for the hospital, place a doctor on staff, stock it with medical supplies and fly the Iraqi flag over the building. Discussions between technical staff are still ongoing with regard to provision of electricity and water, although the IA and MEK did conduct a joint movement and assessment of the east and west water stations on April 13 and 15. The MEK have voiced concerns about possible degradations in the quality of health care, and about who is responsible for electrical and water distribution. They are attempting to resolve these with the GoI representatives.

Confrontations still possible

17. (S) Despite these confidence-building measures, we still see potential for significant confrontations in the coming week. The GoI intends to dispatch personnel to establish a town hall and appoint a representative from National Security Advisor Rubaie's office as mayor. (Note: the current Ashraf mayor has served six years and is unelected.) GoI removal of MEK statues is a potentially serious flashpoint. The MEK have a strong emotional attachment to the monuments, and attempted removal could provoke a visceral reaction and additional protests/sit-ins from the MEK.

18. (S) GoI is still restricting the importation of anything

other than food and medicine into the camp. The MEK are especially concerned about restrictions on fuel imports. This week, the GoI imposed a new restriction that all mail must be opened before it can enter the camp. However, the IA battalion at Ashraf did not have orders to examine the mail, so the mail was returned to Baghdad. (Note. Article 40 of Iraq's constitution provides that "the freedom of communication and correspondence, postal, telegraphic, electronic, and telephonic, shall be guaranteed and may not be monitored, wiretapped, or disclosed except for legal and security necessity and by a judicial decision." End note.)

9.(S) GoI is expected to conclude their survey of CAR on April 22. In the past month, fifteen defectors (14 male, 1 female) left Ashraf, and the MEK report that four more residents wish to depart the camp this week. GoI is currently housing the defectors at hotels in Baghdad until their third-country status can be determined. However, GoI intentions with regard to Iranian defectors who have no third country claim to residency/citizenship remain unclear - indeed, undecided.

10.(S) Embassy escorted delegations to Camp Ashraf from the UK Embassy on April 19 and the UNAMI Human Rights office on April 21. The UK consular delegation determined that none of the 15 individuals who claim UK citizenship had documentation and told us further investigation would be required to determine citizenship. Tahar Boumedra from the UNAMI human rights office met with the IA battalion commander, the Ministry of Human Rights representatives conducting the survey, and MEK leadership. The meetings were uneventful, and he reported to PolMilOff that UNAMI is preoccupied with Disputed Boundary concerns and likely would not visit Ashraf or involve itself in the situation unless another crisis arises. (Comment: the lack of consistent attention from the media, NGOs or international organizations absent a crisis gives the MEK an incentive to manufacture events that will generate press attention. End Note.)

Comment

11. (S) Embassy and MNF-I are encouraging both the GoI and the MEK to stay on the course of dialogue and coordination. However, GoI hard-liners (including the PM) may see MEK compliance on these issues as a sign of weakness and push for

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additional concessions. Indeed, some in the GOI might be disappointed with the MEK's new tactic of turning the other cheek, and redouble efforts to spark a confrontation to justify harsher measures. The GoI's actions may be tempered due to international criticism. On April 20, Amnesty International criticized the GoI for barring doctors from entering Ashraf and for Dr. Rubaie's comments that the GoI would gradually make life 'intolerable' for the MEK. (Ref. B) Embassy and MNF-I continue to reinforce to GoI actors that all actions must comport with the GoI's assurances to treat CAR humanely and in accordance with Iraq's constitution, laws and international obligations.

12. (S) The increase in defections, combined with positive treatment of the defectors by the GoI (should such reports make their way back to the camp) may further test the MEK leadership's control. Madame Parsai recently made statements that she would be willing to face charges at the International Criminal Court. Parsai's suggestion is untenable due to several jurisdictional constraints, but even so it may be prelude to a serious attempt by the MEK leadership at Ashraf to extricate themselves from their current situation. During recent visits, the MEK leadership have seemed tired and have moderated their defiant rhetoric. They may have finally realized both the nature of their situation - that change at Ashraf is inevitable - and the

need to cultivate positive relations with their Iraqi hosts. Shortages of fuel and concessions to the GoI are likely testing the MEK leadership's ability to sustain morale among the CAR. Embassy and MNF-I will continue to coordinate closely to encourage both sides to seek compromise and, at least, to avoid inflammatory provocations and surprises. End Comment.
BUTENIS